

AROUND THE HOLLY TREE

by CLARISSA MACKIE

It was the day before Christmas, and it had been snowing all the morning.

The Marsden children sat around the living room fire and sang Christmas carols and talked about the millions of people who were sending gifts to loved ones, just as the wise men brought gifts to the Christ Child under the Christmas stars.

Suddenly they noticed that Clarice was very thoughtful.

"What is the matter, Sis?" asked Gordon, the oldest boy.

"I am thinking of our dear woods people and how the snow has covered their food so that they may starve to death while we are having a happy Christmas," said Clarice.

Gordon whistled in dismay. "Oh, I never thought of them!" he said.

"I don't want my gray squirrels to starve to death!" said Paul.

"And Mr. Rabbit and his family," added Mabel.

"Or the snowbirds. I saw a whole flock yesterday!" cried Gordon eagerly.

"Or my own dicky bird!" lisped Baby Nan, pointing a fat finger at the canary's cage in the window.

"They all laughed and kissed little Nan.

"And what about you, Cousin Marion?" they asked of the little girl who was visiting them.

"I'm thinking about Mr. Rabbit, too," said Marion. "I was thinking it would be nice if Santa Claus remembered him."

Gordon got up and danced a hornpipe. "Let's have a Christmas tree for the woods people!" he shouted.

What a racket there was as they all rushed into the hall after caps and cloaks and overshoes!

Clarice and Gordon disappeared in the kitchen and were gone a long time. When they came back they carried a little basket.

Baby Nan was taken to her mother's room, and the merry youngsters ran shouting across the snowy garden to the path which led to the woods.

How quiet the woods were when they were in the shadow of the pines and hemlocks!

Suddenly some twigs crackled, and a beautiful deer bounded lightly away and disappeared among the trees.

"He was hungry," said Gordon. "See how he has eaten the twigs from the hemlocks."

All over the snow were the footprints of little animals—rabbits, squirrels, even the trail of a fox which Gordon and Paul pointed out.

And threading in and out like a pattern of lacework were the dainty footprints of birds.

"Poor little woods people!" sighed Clarice. "I'm afraid the snow has covered all the seeds and pine cones."

"Where shall we have the Christmas tree?" asked Mabel, jumping up and down with delight.

"Here!" cried Marion, pointing to a small holly tree. "See, it is already trimmed with red berries!"

"Just the thing," said Gordon, opening his basket. "Now, youngsters, step up and help yourselves to goodies to put on the Christmas tree."

"Here are nuts for the squirrels, bits of suet for the blue jays and the snow birds, some lettuce and carrots for Mr. Rabbit and his family, some canary seed to scatter on this cloth and apples for everybody."

What a wonderful Christmas tree that was! Everybody helped to trim it, and when the lettuce and carrots had been tied on to the lowest branches so that the rabbit family could reach them, the young Marsdens all drew away and hid behind a clump of hemlocks.

Bright eyes must have been watching the holly tree, for very soon the guests began to arrive at the Christmas party. Such a twittering of birds and crackling of nuts and crunching of carrots and crisp lettuce! Don't you think their little hearts sent up thanks to the loving Father, who had reminded the Marsden children not to forget his little woods people?

And as the children raced across the snow toward home they sang Christmas carols until they were overheard by a great sleigh load of people coming from the railroad station.

"Merry Christmas!" they called. "Merry Christmas!" And the sleigh stopped and took them all in, for they were all going to spend Christmas at the Marsdens. There were Marion's father and mother, and there were aunts and uncles and grandparents. "Merry Christmas!" they all said to each other, for they were happy.

And I'm sure if you could have understood all the twittering and chattering around the holly tree in the woods you might have learned that the woods people were saying "Merry Christmas!" too.

Cupid's Christmas Frolics.

Christmas would be almost as incomplete without its love superstitions as without its holly and plum pudding, and the maid who cannot forecast her matrimonial fortune at least once a year is scarcely worth a lover at all.

She ought to know, whether she does or not, that if she wants her husband to be to reveal himself in her dreams she has only to eat the egg of a black hen on Christmas eve and any fears or hesitations she may be troubled with will soon be dispelled when once her head is cozily pillowed. If she wishes to make the spell as potent as possible she will boil the egg hard, remove the yolk and, after she has filled up the cavity with common or table salt, will eat egg, shell, salt and all. If she doesn't dream of her lover then it will certainly not be the hen's fault.

If she is not partial to eggs our curious young lady may peel a St. Thomas' onion, wrap it in a handkerchief and place it under her pillow on Christmas eve, reciting these mystic lines as she does so:

Good St. Thomas, do me right
And see my true love come tonight.
That I may see him in the face
And him in my kind arms embrace.

It is just as natural for a maid to speculate as to the ardor of her swain's affection as to wish to settle the young man's identity, and if she will she may know to a nicety how far his infatuation for her has gone. This is what she must do to gain this desirable knowledge: When she retires to bed she must place three pails of water in her bedroom and attach three holly leaves to her nightdress. Then let her slumber in full assurance that her lover in dream form will present himself and touch one or other of the three pails. And all depends on what particular pail he touches. If it is No. 1 it is a sure sign that his affection is but skin deep; if No. 2, he worships the very ground she treads on, but if he touches the third pail, alas, for her expectations, for he loves her not at all!

But Cupid has no monopoly of Christmas superstitions. Did not Shakespeare himself lend his sanction to the belief that the cock by its crowing on Christmas night keeps all evil influences at a respectful distance? Some say that over 'gainst that season comes

Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated, The bird of dawning singeth all night long.

And then they say no spirit dare stir abroad.

Because a Little Child Was Born.

Because a little child was born
The earth is filled with peace;
Old wrongs, old sorrows are forgot
In suffering's sweet surcease.
Oh, men that strain for empty gain,
Oh, hearts with hatreds torn,
There is no room for strife today—
A little child is born!

—Terese Beatrice O'Hara in Ladies' Home Journal.



Christ and His Birthday.

As to his birth, Christ gave no thought to the manner of its celebration by his disciples. They do not appear to have remembered it during his life. Had he ever any knowledge of the adorable stories regarding his crib for us? It is hardly probable. And, behold, that forgotten, neglected birthday has conquered a place of honor! It is celebrated in conditions in which the Saviour might recognize his own purposes. To speak of one aspect only, Jesus loved children as no one has ever loved them. "Let them come to me," he said to the lofty apostles, anxious to guard him from that merry, unruly crowd suspected incapable of edification. No doubt those most serious ancestors of our traditions had occasion that day and often in similar circumstances to believe the Master touched with insanity.

No matter, the intentions of the Son of Man have been largely realized. His birthday has become the day of the children. No earthly day has shed more brightness upon their path. No church festival gives more life to the immeasurable truth of the promise, "I shall be with you to the end of the world." None makes it sweeter to the heart.

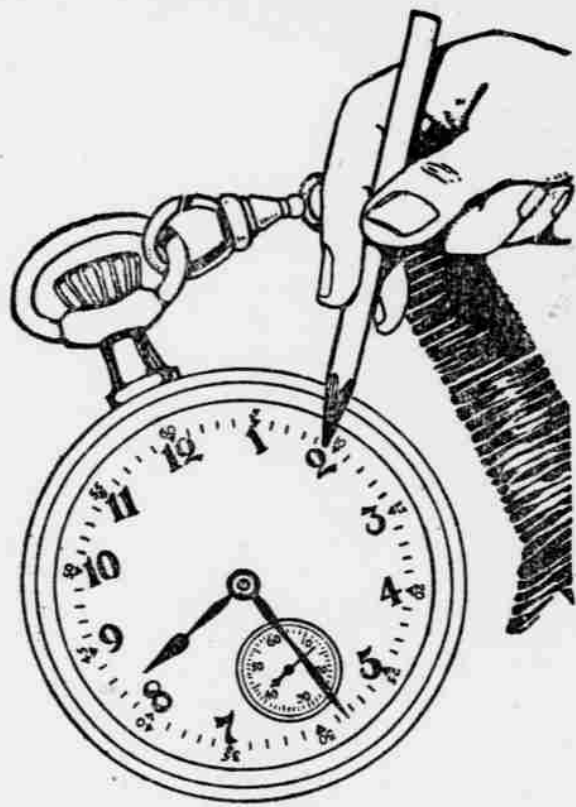
Christmas has a charm beyond them all. It was the Christian soul, filled full with Jesus, created this festival. Every generation has given it something of its own. There has been a rivalry of good will. In the Eucharist, according to a doctrine the abuse of which must not make us forget its true and sorrowful profoundness, Christ dies from age to age for our sins and will suffer until the last sinner is saved. In the radiance of Christmas Christ smiles eternally upon the little ones . . . and the grownups who can make themselves children again.—Charles Wagner, Author of "The Simple Life."

CHRISTMAS GAMES AND SPORTS

Doing the Watch Trick

THE watch trick here described is interesting to while away odd minutes at Yuletide. Request some one to think of one of the numbers from one to twelve on the dial of your watch and ask him to add one to it every time you tap the crystal over the dial with a pencil (see illustration) until he reaches twenty, and then to notify you. Tell him that by the twentieth tap you will have read his mind so accurately that you will then strike the number he first thought of without asking any questions.

The method of doing this trick is very simple. For the first seven taps you may strike at random any of the



DOING THE WATCH TRICK.

numbers on the watch dial, but at the eighth tap strike twelve, at the ninth, eleven; at the tenth, ten, and so on around backward until you are notified by the chooser that he has reached twenty in his count.

If the instructions have been properly followed the pencil will then rest upon the chosen number, because if twelve—the highest number that can be taken—is chosen, eight taps will bring it to twenty, so that your pencil, according to instructions, will then be on twelve, and any other number selected on the dial will be less than twelve by just the amount that will cause the pencil taps to shift backward from twelve to the thought of number when the count of twenty has been reached by the chooser.

"Old Soldier In Town"

This is a very old English Christmas game and is not nearly as simple as it seems to be. The players sit all around the room.

One person comes around to each and puts a number of questions, which must be answered without saying Mr. or Mrs., white or black, yes or no. The game begins something like this: An old soldier has come to town to see what you have to give him. The answer may be "nothing" or "an old coat." "Is it worn at all?" he asks. "It is not," is the reply. "What color is it?" "Gray." "A light gray?" "A very dark gray." "Are there any pockets in the coat?" "Three." "Only three?" "Three only." "Well, have you anything else?" "Nothing." "Not a single thing but the old coat?" "Not a thing." "Well, who lives in that house over there?" "The Browns." "Do they visit you?" "Sometimes." "Both Mr. and Mrs. Brown?" "Usually." "Have they any family?" "Two children." "The house is painted white, is it not?" "Well, I should say a shade of ivory." "I suppose you are thinking I should be making my way to the next door, do you not?" "I do." "I hope I have not given you too much trouble, have I?" "Not at all." The player who gets caught during the soldier's visit must pay a forfeit and is out of the game. Of course different questions will suggest themselves.

Game of "The Bookbinder"

"Bookbinder" is a holiday time diversion that looks simple and tame, but can be made highly exciting. Any number of persons sit in a circle, each holding a book on the back of his clinched fists. One who has been chosen bookbinder and stands in the middle of the circle goes to any player and, seizing that player's book, attempts to rap his knuckles, which the holder of the book tries to avoid by pulling back his hands quickly.

If the bookbinder succeeds in this the player whose knuckles he raps changes places with him; otherwise he replaces the book and tries to do the same with some one else. The bookbinder may pretend to seize a book without actually doing so, and if the holder pulls away his hands so that the book falls he must take the leader's place as if his knuckles had been rapped.

The leader can make this game very exciting if he runs quickly from one to another, pretending to take up one book and then seizing another.

Christmas Frolics For the Children

A CLEVER little entertainment was given on a recent Christmas by a number of young girls and boys. These girls and boys represented wax works of all the children of the nursery. There were Old Mother Goose, Red Riding Hood, Bo Peep, Little Boy Blue and all of the children imaginable from nurseryland. They were dressed in costumes to suit the character, each labeled with his or her own title. Of course the children had to stand as erect and as immovable as wax works, and, while some laughable incidents occurred, they did not dare smile.

Some one played a lively song to awaken Sleeping Beauty from her Christmas dream, and when she came out on the stage in her white gown to get her Christmas presents she was confronted by the whole nursery family in wax works. She talked to them, but they were very immovable and unapproachable, so she sat down in their midst and cried, for it was a very lonely Christmas. A fairy then appeared and said she would make the dolls talk and play with her, so she went around and passed her magic wand before each girl and boy, and immediately they began to jerk their arms, legs and heads stiffly. Before the music ceased they all joined hands and were singing and dancing. The pretty effect of this entertainment is produced by the children acting very much like unjointed statuary.

This entertainment can be made very beautiful and attractive with merry songs and dancing. The children should wear crape paper or cheesecloth costumes and have their faces and hair powdered white and the stage or room must be decorated with white cotton for snow and elaborately trimmed with holly and pine.

A holiday party for a large number of children might consist of an old fashioned store. This store should be made in the parlor and the children given small checks representing money, with which they are to buy certain articles. Of course each check will correspond with a number upon some article, and all will be supposed to divide what they get. There should be big surprises in the candy boxes, jelly glasses and bottles, and immense boxes should contain popcorn, apples, candy or kindergarten trifles. Some of the largest boxes might hold little things picked up in the ten cent store. The entertainment should be planned in a manner to give each child something attractive and something fun provoking, without slighting any. The storekeepers should be the older brothers and sisters of the little folks, and the store should be as much like a country store as possible.

It would be a clever idea for a party for a hostess to send out invitations to the friends of her children and state that Mrs. Santa Claus would entertain the children at her home on a certain night or afternoon between Christmas and New Year's. The house should be decorated for the occasion, and Mrs. Santa Claus must wear a black or red dress, large white apron and cap and spectacles and have white hair. Of course if Mr. Santa Claus is present it will add that much to the merriment. If little girls are invited they might come prepared to dress little dolls to send to the hospitals or children's homes, and if they cannot dress dolls at least they could make candy and popcorn to send to these little folks. Another amusement would be the making of pretty paper dolls. Then there could be games of different kinds, such as throwing bean bags and while blindfolded hanging the Christmas tree upon a paper Christmas tree planned on the wall or door. When the invitations are sent tell the little girl or boy to bring her or his favorite toy.

Holly and Mistletoe Game

Provide green and red ribbons of about two inches in width. Divide the party into sides, giving one side red, the other green streamers. Those holding red are holly; the green are mistletoe. One person holds the end of all the ribbons in his hand; a child holds the end of a single ribbon. Form a circle with the ribbons radiating from the center like the spokes of a wheel. The test is this:

When the leader calls, "All holly let go!" they must hold on tight, while the mistletoe drop their ribbons, and when the command is "Let go mistletoe!" the hollies must obey. The ones who fail to do the reverse of the command are required to pay a forfeit—recte, sing, draw a picture or do some amusing "stunt." Paying the penalties may be made a very entertaining feature of an evening's fun.

"Night Before Christmas" Game. Everybody has read "The Night Before Christmas," most famous of Yuletide poems, many times. It is an interesting intellectual Christmas game to try to set down how much one remembers of the verses. Tablets and pencils are passed, and each player is asked to write as much as he or she can remember of the poem. Allow fifteen minutes for the recollection and compare the different papers with the printed poem. Give an illustrated copy of the poem as a prize for the best recollection of it.



A MERRY CHRISTMAS to us all, my dears! God bless us! God bless us every one, said Tiny Tim the last of all. CHARLES DICKENS.

MEN cannot live isolated; we are all bound together. No higher man can separate himself from the lowest. CARLYLE.

EVERY day is a fresh beginning. Listen, my soul, to the glad refrain and, spite of old sorrow and older sinning, take heart of the day and begin again. SUSAN COOLIDGE.

ROUGH going, ardent and sincere earnestness—there is no substitute for them. CHARLES DICKENS.

REALIZE that doing good is the only certainly happy action of a man's life. SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

YET to have gently dreamt precludes low ends. JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

CHRISTMAS time I have always thought of as a good time—a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. CHARLES DICKENS.

HEAP on more wood, the wind is chill, but, let it whistle as it will, we'll keep our Christmas merry still. SIR WALTER SCOTT.

REJOICE, O young man, in thy youth and let thy heart cheer thee. THE BIBLE.

I SAID it in the meadow path; I say it on the mountain stairs—the best things any mortal hath are those which every mortal shares. LUCY LARCOM.

SO the first glance told me there was no duty patent in the world like daring to be good and true myself, leaving the show of things to the lord of show. ROBERT BROWNING.

THEN arose a joyous clamor from the wildfowl on the mere, and a voice within cried: "Listen! Christmas carols even here!" CHARLES KINGSLEY.

MAY the fair goddess, Fortune, fall deep in love with thee! Prosperity be thy page! SHAKESPEARE.

AGAIN at Christmas did we weave the holly round the Christmas hearth. The silent snow possessed the earth and calmly fell on Christmas eve. TENNYSON.

SO ever keep hope, for this is strength, and he who possesseth it can worry through typhoid. RUDYARD KIPLING.

Electricity In Toyland

It is only recently that electricity began to play a conspicuous part in the Christmas holiday. Of all the electric toys the trolley car is one of the best. It gets its power from the lighting circuit and will run on its circular track quite well, as well as its big cousin, runs in the city streets. Toy motors and generators to run toy machinery are especially interesting to boys. For girls modern doll houses are illuminated with tiny electric lamps.

This year Santa Claus will have in his pack a new toy for little girls, a miniature electric range. It is a complete practical range that cooks and bakes perfectly, the very thing for which little girls have longed with all their hearts. It is a safe plaything for children, and when using it they not only occupy themselves happily, but they actually learn to cook. There is a complete set of utensils furnished free, with a cookbook for children written so simply that they can understand it without difficulty. This small range is fifteen inches high, with six burners and a practical little oven.

"Yule Doughs" and Mince Pies.

The Yule doughs (little cakes), mince pies and plum porridge (now plum pudding), were old special Christmas dishes. The first, also called Yule babies, had their origin in Rome, where images of the child Jesus and the Virgin Mary were sold by the bakers on Christmas eve. The following account of the English mince pie, as recorded by an old traveler, will doubtless be interesting to housewives of the present day: "Then every family against Christmas made a famous mince pie, called Christmas pie; it is a most learned mixture of meats, tongues, chicken, eggs, sugar, raisins, lemon, orange peel and various kinds of spices. They also made a sort of soup with plums, which is not at all inferior to the pie, which is in their language called plum porridge." Her-lick, in his account of the ceremonies of Christmas eve, writes: Come guard this night the Christmas pie.

That the thief, though ne'er sly,
With his flesh hooks don't come nigh
To catch it.

From him who all alone sits there,
Having his eyes still in his care,
And a deal of nightly fears
To watch it.

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